

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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P R 181018Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8857

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 1446

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PK, AF

SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL IMPACT OF SHERPAO'S

ASSASSINATION AND BAN ON NAP

REF: ISLAMABAD 1375, 1355

SUMMARY: IN THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE FEBRUARY 8 ASSASSINATION OF NWFP SENIOR MINISTER SHERPAO, THE GOP CARRIED OUT A SERIES OF MEASURES WHICH FURTHER DAMAGED THE FRAGILE STRUCTURE OF DEMOCRATIC CONSENSUS AND FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL DIVISION OF POWER EMBODIED IN THE CONSTITUTION OF 1973. IN DECIDING TO BAN NAP AND ARREST ITS LEADERS, BHUTTO APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN MOVED BY THE CONVICTION THAT THEY WERE AT LEAST ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF SHERPAO AND EARLIER ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND HAD COME TO REPRESENT, WITH THEIR AFGHAN GOVERNMENT BACKING, INTOLERABLE CHALLENGES BOTH TO LAW AND ORDER AND TO HIS OWN AUTHORITY WHICH COULD ONLY BE DEALT WITH BY SEVERE

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MEASURES. HE MUST ALSO HAVE SEEN THAT IF THERE WAS EVER

AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT FOR TAKING THIS ACTION THE SHERPAO ASSASSINATION PROVIDED IT. IF BHUTTO DID INDEED RECKON THAT THE ACTION TAKEN AGAINST NAP WOULD PROVE ACCEPTABLE IN THE PUNJAB AND SIND, HE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN RIGHT. HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY AND THE CONSULATES, ALL OF WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THIS REPORT, HAVE HEARD SOME RESERVATIONS VOICED PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY BY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS THAT THE BAN, COMING PRIOR TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIRECT NAP RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BLAST, IS NOT JUSTIFIED.

THE QUESTION OF GUILT FOR SHERPAO'S DEATH AND OTHER BOMB BLASTS IS STILL UNANSWERED. THE EVENTUAL COURSE OF THE PPP AND THE COALITION GOVERNMENT IN NWFP IS ALSO A QUESTION MARK. THE BAN ON NAP WILL STRONGLY INFLUENCE THE FUTURE OF REGIONALIST FORCES IN THE FRONTIER AND, PERHAPS, BALUCHISTAN. COUNTRYWIDE THE FEAR IS EXPRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S DECLARATION OF A THREAT TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY POSED BY NAP MAY BECOME A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE AT THIS POINT TO WHAT EXTENT REGIONALISM IN PAKISTAN WILL BECOME RADICALIZED IN THE WAKE OF THE BAN ON ANP AND HOW SERIOUS A THREAT SUCH A RADICALIZATION WOULD POSE TO PAK SECURITY. THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION MAY WELL SPUR THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF REPRESSION AND VIOLENCE WHICH CAN OVER THE YEARS FURTHER STRAIN THE POLITICAL FABRIC OF PAKISTAN. END SUMMARY.

1. IN THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE FEBRUARY 8 ASSASSINATION OF NWFP SENIOR MINISTER SHERPAO, THE GOP CARRIED OUT A SERIES OF MEASURES WHICH FURTHER DAMAGED THE FRAGILE STRUCTURE OF DEMOCRATIC CONSENSUS AND FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL DIVISION OF POWER EMBODIED IN THE CONSTITUTION OF 1973. ALTHOUGH THE NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY WAS BASED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN THE BORDER PROVINCES OF THE FRONTIER AND BALUCHISTAN, IT WAS THE STRONGEST SINGLE OPPOSITION ORGANIZATION AND HAD, IN ITS LEADER WALI KHAN (WHO ALSO HEADED UP THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT IN PARLIAMENT) ONE OF THE FEW POLITICIANS IN PAKISTAN TODAY WHO APPROACHES IN STATURE PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO. WHAT REMAINS OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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OPPOSITION AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL HAS BEEN OVERAWED BY CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND FRESHLY ENACTED LEGISLATION WHICH ADDS TO THE ALREADY IMPRESSIVE ARRAY OF MEASURES GOP HAS AVAILABLE TO COPE WITH POLITICAL CHALLENGES. IN THE TWO BORDER PROVINCES, THE BANNING OF THE NAP ELIMINATES WHAT HAS BEEN THE FOCAL POINT FOR THOSE SUPPORTING THE CAUSE OF PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY AND SHARPLY WEAKENS THESE FORCES, AT LEAST IN THE ARENA OF LEGITIMATE POLITICAL

ACTIVITY. THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION MAY WELL SPUR THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF REPRESSION AND VILENCE WHICH CAN OVER THE YEARS FURTHER STRAIN THE POLITICAL FABRIC OF PAKISTAN.

2. IN DECIDING TO BAN NAP AND ARREST ITS LEADERS, BHUTTO APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN MOVED BY THE CONVICTION THAT THEY WERE AT LEAST ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF SHERPAO AND EARLIER ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND HAD COME TO REPRESENT, WITH THEIR AFGHAN GOVERNMENT BACKING, INTOLERABLE CHALLENGES BOTH TO LAW AND ORDER AND TO HIS OWN AUTHORITY WHICH COULD ONLY BE DEALT WITH BY SEVERE MEASURES. HE MUST ALSO HAVE SEEN THAT IF THERE WAS EVER AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT FOR TAKING THIS ACTION THE SHERPAO ASSASSINATION PROVIDED IT. WITH HIS GOOD SENSE OF WHAT POLITICAL PAKISTANIS WILL ACCEPT AND NOT ACCEPT, HE DOUBTLESS JUDGED THAT MAJORITIES IN THE TWO LARGER PROVINCES WOULD RALLY BEHIND HIS MOVE AGAINST HIS DISCREDITED OPPONENTS. THE FACT THAT SHERPAO WAS A VERY CLOSE ASSOCIATE PROBABLY ALSO HELPED PROJECT BHUTTO IN THAT DIRECTION.

3. REACTIONS: IF BHUTTO DID INDEED RECKON THAT THE ACTION TAKEN AGAINST NAP WOULD PROVE ACCEPTABLE IN THE PUNJAB AND SIND, HE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN RIGHT. CONSULATE GENERALS KARACHI AND LAHORE REPORT THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC THERE, ALWAYS SUSPICIOUS OF THE FRONTIER

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INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 1446

NAP BECAUSE OF ITS TIES TO THOSE WHO HAD OPPOSED PARTITION OF BRITISH INDIA IN 1946/47, ENCOURAGED BY SUCCEEDING GOVERNMENTS OF PAKISTAN TO BELIEVE THAT NAP WAS WORKING FOR SECESSION IN COLLUSION WITH AFGHANISTAN AND INDIA, IS NOW WILLING TO BELIEVE THAT THE CONTINUING BOMB BLASTS, INCLUDING THE ONE WHICH CUT DOWN SHERPAO, ARE THE WORK OF THE PARTY WITH THE SUPPORT OF EXILED AJMAL KHATTAK AND THE GOA. IF NAP IS RESPONSIBLE FOR USING UNCONSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE AND WORKING FOR THE FURTHER BREAK-UP OF PAKISTAN, THIS LINE OF REASONING GOES, PAK DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY WILL BE BETTER OFF FOR NAP'S ABSENCE.

4. THE EMBASSY HAS HEARD SOME RESERVATIONS VOICED BY OPPOSITION PUBLICLY AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS PRIVATELY THAT BAN, COMING PRIOR TO ESTABLISHMENT OF NAP RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BLAST, IS NOT JUSTIFIED. CONSULATES IN KARACHI, LAHORE AND PESHAWAR REPORT SAME EXPERIENCE. THESE SOURCES HAVE SAID THAT SUCH EXPLOSIONS (AND POLITICAL MURDERS) CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT NEW PHENOMENA, AND BAN AT THIS TIME -- BEFMEZ EVIDENCE IS IN -- RAISES SUSPICION THAT BHUTTO HAS MANIPULATED PUBLIC ANGER AND SORROW TO SLAP DOWN A FEEBLE AND INEFFECTIVE OPPOSITION. ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF BHUTTO'S PROPENSITY FOR OVERKILL, THEY SAY. OPPOSITION MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND MINUS MOST OF NAP CONTINGENT -- HAVE PROTESTED THESEAN, ARRESTS AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY. WEAKENED BY THE LOSS OF WALI KHAN'S LEADERSHIP, THEY HAVE BEEN INDECISIVE IN THEIR APPROACH WITHIN PARLIAMENT. INFURIATED OVER THE STEAMROLLER TACTICS IN RUSHING THROUGH FAR-REACHING BILLS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS THEY HAVE TRIED TO RAISE THEIR VOICES IN PROTEST, WERE HEAVILY OUTVOTED AND ENDED BY BOYCOTTING THE SESSION. THE GOVERNMENT, EMBARRASSED BY THE MOVE, HASTILY ADJOURNED PARLIAMENT AND IS SEEKING TO NEGOTIATE THE RETURN OF THE BOYCOTTERS.

5. THE QUESTION OF GUILT FOR SHERPAO'S DEATH AND OTHER BOMB BLASTS IS STILL UNANSWERED. THE THEORIES ARE FAMILIAR: IT IS WALI AND NAP HIGH COMMAND WITH OR WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF AJMAL KHATTAK; IT IS THE GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO DEFAME NAP; THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT WORKING THROUGH AJMAL KHATTAK. IN PESHAWAR AT THE END OF JANUARY,

SEVERAL NAP SUPPORTERS TOLD EMBOFF AND CONSUL EVERTS THEY WERE MYSTIFIED. THEY SPECULATED THE EXPLOSIONS MAY BE UNCONNECTED; THE WORK OF VARIOUS DISGRUNTLED INDIVIDUALS. THE EMBASSY IS NOT AWARE THAT ANY EVIDENCE HAS BEEN FOUND TO LINK THE PESHAWAR UNIVERSITY BLAST TO NAP. THIS HAS BEEN TRUE AS WELL FOR MOST IF NOT ALL OF RECENT BOMBINGS.

6. IN EMBASSY'S VIEW, THE EXPLOSIVE MATERIALS ARE RELATIVELY EASILY AVAILABLE IN COUNTRY AND DO NOT REQUIRE AFGHAN SUPPLIES. THE PATTERN OF EXPLOSIONS IS NOT CONSISTENT: MOST OF APPROXIMATELY 80 IN PAST 2 YEARS HAVE BEEN IN UNINHABITED PLACES; A FEW HAVE HAD STRATEGIC TARGETS SUCH AS RAILWAY BRIDGE AND GAS DISTRIBUTION PLANT; PERHAPS HALF DOZEN HAVE GONE OFF IN CROWDED PUBLIC PLACES WHERE INJURY AND/OR DEATH INEVITABLE. WHILE FEDERAL MINISTERS QAIYUM AND YUSUF KHATTAK -- OLD ENEMIES OF WALI KHAN -- ARE ADAMANT AND EXPLICIT, BHUTTO AND OTHER CABINET MEMBERS SEEM TO BLAME NAP AND GOA FOR CREATING THE CLIMATE FAVORABLE TO VIOLENCE.

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7. THE EVENTUAL COURSE OF THE PPP AND THE COALITION GOVERNMENT IN NWFP IS ALSO A QUESTION MARK. NINE DAYS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION, BHUTTO SCRAPPED THE MINISTRY HEADED BY CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR -- A FIGUREHEAD FOR A GOVERNMENT IN EFFECT LED BY SHERPAO -- AND INITIATED GOVERNOR'S RULE SPETEL). THE COALITION'S PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY MAJORITY REMAINS IN PLACE, IF TEMPORARILY IN SUSPENSE, AND A NEW POPULAR GOVERNMENT CAN PRESUMABLY BE RE-ESTABLISHED -- AIEN SOME ONE CAN BE FOUND EFFECTIVELY TO HEAD IT. THE EMBASSY AGREES THAT RUMORED CANDIDATES FOR PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP, ASLAM KHATTAK AND QAIYUM KHAN, MAY BE TOUGH AND WILY BUT BOTH ARE AMBITIOUS AND PROBABLY LACK THE KIND OF UNQUESTONING LOYALTY BHUTTO DEMANDS (REFTEL 1355). EMBASSY HAS SOME RESERVATIONS CONCERNING QAIYUM'S COMMITMENT TO KEEP QAIYUM MUSLIM LEAGUE SEPARATE; WE CANNOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY THAT HE WOULD THROW OVER HIS PARTY IN EXCHANGE FOR CHIEF MINISTERSHIP OF FRONTIER. PRIME MINISTER WILL BE THE ONE TO CHOOSE, AND HE WILL HAVE TO WORK OUT NEW COMBINATION OF PERSONAL ALLIANCES TO ACCOMMODATE CHANGE IN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP.

8. THE BAN ON NAP WILL STRONGLY INFLUENCE THE FUTURE OF REGIONALIST FORCES IN THE FRONTIER AND, PERHAPS BALUCHISTAN. IN BOTH PROVINCES THE PARTY HAS ABSORBED PREVIOUSLY EXISTENT REGIONALIST POLITICAL GROUPINGS AND ITS PLATFORM IN 1970 ELECTIONS FAVORED MAXIMUM PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY. IN BOTH PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES NAP WON A

PLURALITY. IN THE FRONTIER, NAP IS A FAIRLY FORMIDABLE
POLITICAL FORCE AND HAS MASS SUPPORT IN MANY AREAS.
WHILE THE REST OF THE COUNTRY HAS FORGOTTEN THE ONGOING
SPECIAL TRIBUNAL HANDLING BOMB-BLAST CASES, THE DRUMHEAD
JUSTICE METED OUT TO NAP FOLLOWERS IN PESHAWAR HAS
DAMAGED THE GOP'S CREDIBILITY IN THE FRONTIER. PATHAN
HAUVINISTS WILL BE EVEN MORE EMBITTERED BY THE ARRESTS,
THE BAN ON NAP AND NOW GOVERNORS' RULE: IT WILL BE INTERPRETED
AS MORE EVIDENCE THAT THE CENTER DOES NOT UNDERSTAND
REGIONAL GRIEVANCES AND INTENDS TO RULE FROM THE CENTER WITH
AN IRON HAND.

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9. COUNTRYWIDE THE FEAR IS EXPRESSED THAT THE GOVERN-
MENT'S DECLARATION OF A THREAT TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY
POSED BY NAP MAY BECOME A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY.
THE CONSULATES NOTE THAT THE INDEPENDENT PRESS, NON-
PARTISAN OBSERVERS AND SOME PPP SUPPORTERS FEEL THAT THE
ARREST OF MODERATE LEADERSHIP LEAVES NAP IN HANDS OF
EFSCEMIST ELEMENT. IN EMBASSY'S VIEW, ALTHOUGH THE EVIDENCE
IS MIXED, ON BALANCE WE FEEL THAT WALI DID REPRESENT
THE MODERATE FACTION OF NAP SEEKING A BETTER DEAL FOR
PROVINCE WITHIN PAKISTAN. AJMAL KHATTAK, IN HIS BBC
INTERVIEW WITH MASON (LONDON 1945 NOTAL), CRITICIZES
WALI FOR THIS AND PRONOUNCES WALI TO BE "MISTAKEN".
KHATTAK FELT THAT "UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD (BALUCH
AND LXXKHTOON) FUTURE LIE (WITH PAKISTAN)." REPORTS FROM
CONSULATE PESHAWAR OVER THE YEARS HAVE WARNED THAT THE

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YOUNGER, EDUCATED PATHANS ARE MORE AGGRESSIVE ABOUT THE CAUSE OF PATHAN CULTURE, MORE APT TO DESPAIR OF EVER GETTING A FAIR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEAL OUT OF THE GOP. THEY HAVE EXERTED PRESSURE ON WALI TO WORK TO REMOVE REGIONAL RATHER THAN NATIONAL GRIEVANCES. WALI CLAIMS THEY SEEK A MORE RADICAL AND SECESSIONIST DIVERSION.

10. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THIS RADICAL REGIONALISM A THREAT TO PAKISTAN'S SECURITY? IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL. AS INDICATED EARLIER, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM OR DENY NAP AND/OR AFGHAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE SEVERAL BOMB BLASTS. IN ANY CASE, THEY REPRESENT AN EMBARRASSMENT, NOT A THREAT TO GOVERNMENT CONTROL. WHAT ABOUT THE NATURALIZATION OF NAP? CONSUL EVERTS ASSESSMENT IS THAT ALTHOUGH WALI WOULD PREFER TO KEEP NWFP AS PART OF PAKISTAN, HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER SECESSION IF PATHANS WERE PUSHED TO WALL. DESPITE DIFFERENCES WITHIN NAP IN THE PAST, EVERTS NOW FEEL THAT THEY WILL UNITE IN THE FACE OF THE CURRENT CLAMPDOWN AND LEADERSHIP
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WILL BECOME RADICALIZED. EVEN IF GOA OR KHATTAK DID PROVIDE MATERIAL TO GUERRILLAS, EVERTS ESTIMATES THAT SUCH UNDERGROUND ACTIONS COULD BE HANDLED BY THE GOP. OCCASIONAL BOMB BLASTS, PERHAPS MORE FREQUENTLY AGAINST LEADERSHIP OR STRATEGIC TARGETS, APPEARS TO BE LIKELY MANIFESTATION. EMBASSY FEELS THAT ANOTHER POSSIBLE COURSE FOR CPP LEADERSHIP IS MORE MODERATE ONE OF REMAINING QUIETLY IN JAIL IN ANTICIPATION OF GAINING FRONTIER SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT AND IN EXPECTATION THAT GENERAL PAKISTANI PUBLIC WILL SOONER OR LATER TIRE OF BHUTTO.

11. KARACHI NOTES THAT THERE IS SOME FEAR OF RECRUDESCENCE OF GUERRILLA ACTIVITY IN BALUCHISTAN, PROBABLY IN THE SPRING. TWO BALUCH YOUTHS TOLD CONGEN OFFS THAT REMAINING GUERRILLAS ARE BATTERED BUT NOT BEATEN, ARE WAITING TO

SEE HOW LONG BHUTTO CAN AFFORD TO KEEP ARMY IN THE
HILLS. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT GOP IS TREATING
BALUCHISTAN NAP MORE LENIENTLY THAN FRONTIER BRANCH.
OF BALUCHISTAN NAP'S LEGISLATORS WE UNDERSTAND SOME ARRESTED,
SOME UNDER HOUSE ARREST, SOME ARE FREE. CONSULATE
GENERAL KARACHI OPINES THAT THIS MAY BE DUE
TO CONTINUING GOP HOPES TO SPLIT PROVINCIAL BRANCH AWA
FROM NATIONAL NAP PARENT.

12. SUM OF WEEK'S EVENTS RAISE QUESTION OF RECRUDESCENCE
OF AUTHORITARIANISM AND INCREASE IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE.
MUZZLING THE OPPOSITION COULD RADICALIZE THE DISCON-
TENTED, DRIVE THOSE WHO CONSTITUTE A SERIOUS THREAT
UNDERGROUND AND MAKE MARTYRS OF THOSE JAILED. TIME
WILL TELL WHETHER THE BAN OF NAP WILL END BOMBS.

WE DOUBT IT. CROWDS WERE BROUGHT TOGETHER TO PROTEST
THE ASSASSINATION AND BLAME NAP, BUT THESE TACTICS CAN
BE DIFFICULT TO CONTROL. IF ORDINARY POLITICAL DISSENT
BECOMES SYNONYMOUS WITH TREASON IT WILL TEND TO ALIENATE
THE PRIME MINISTER FROM HIS PUBLIC AND ISOLATE HIM
FROM REALITY. FINALLY, THE FURTHER RECRUDESCENCE OF
THE PROBLEM OF REGIONALIST VIOLENCE -- ONE WHICH HAS FACED
THE PAKS IN MORE ACUTE FORM SINCE THE ACCESSION IN KABUL
OF PRESIDENT DAUD-- WEAKENS THE GOP BY DIVERTING NATIONAL
RESOURCES AWAY FROM NATIONAL HIRING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
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AND THE PROTECTION OF ITS NATITQAL FRONTIERS.
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Message Attributes

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